

transparency of each of the pixels is adjustable. In this case, the electro-optical panel enables display of the mask image in the form of a dot display and use of a general-purpose electro-optical panel.

[0034] Preferably, the slot machine further comprises a random number selector, which determines one of a plurality of lottery results including at least one special lottery result corresponding to the special symbol, to generate internal information indicating the determined one of the lottery results. The controller displays the mask image on the electro-optical panel when the internal information indicates that the determined one of the lottery results is the special lottery result.

[0035] In such a configuration, a player can be informed that a win is determined through an internal lottery. Further, since the electro-optical panel is interposed between the reels and the player, the mask area and the non-mask area appear in the line of sight in which the player stares during the course of a game. Consequently, the player does not need to shift his/her line of sight. The player can therefore enjoy playing games over a long period of time without involvement of eye fatigue. In addition, the player can clearly view the special symbol every time the special symbol passes through the non-mask area. Hence, the player can readily stop reels in synchronism with the timing at which the special symbol passes through the non-mask area.

[0036] Preferably, the slot machine further comprises a storage which stores at least one mask data adapted to display the at least one mask image. The controller reads out the mask data in the storage to display the mask image on the electro-optical panel. In this case, the mask data may be data of bit map format. Further, the mask data may be one-bit data to be used for distinguishing a mask area from a non-mask area on a per-pixel basis. By such a data structure, the storage capacity of the storage section can be reduced. When a one-bit data structure is employed, a first voltage to be used for displaying an image in a mask area and a second voltage to be used for displaying an image in a non-mask area may be determined beforehand. In accordance with a data value of the mask data, one is selected from the first and second voltages, and the thus-selected voltage is supplied to the electro-optical panel.

[0037] Here, it is preferable that the slot machine further comprises a random number selector, which determines one of a plurality of lottery results including a plurality of special lottery results corresponding to a plurality of special symbols, to generate internal information indicating the determined one of the lottery results. The controller reads out one of a plurality of mask data in the storage to display one of a plurality of mask images on the electro-optical panel when the internal information indicates that the determined one of the lottery results is one of the special lottery results corresponding to the one of the special symbols.

[0038] In such a configuration, a player can be informed that a win is determined through an internal lottery. For instance, a determination may be made as to whether or not the player is playing a super bonus big game, which may be used for informing the player of determination of a win for a small winning combination during the course of the super big bonus game.

[0039] Preferably, the slot machine further comprises: a main body, which houses the reels therein; and a door,

attached to the main body, the door formed with a transparent window through which a player is able to see the reels. The electro-optical panel disposed along an inner face of the transparent window.

[0040] In such a configuration, the electro-optical panel can be protected by display windows. Here, if the window is curved, the first and second transparent substrates are formed preferably from flexible material. In this case, the electro-optical panel can be flexed, but transparent plastic is preferable as material for the first and second transparent substrates used in such an electro-optical panel. Further, in terms of heat-resisting properties, use of polyethersulfone (PbS) is preferable because the electro-optical panel can be fixed in a curved form along the inner face of the window. If the window is flat, in addition to flexible material, non-flexible material can also be used for the first and second transparent substrates. Glass or the like material can be used as non-flexible material.

[0041] Preferably, the controller shifts a gaming status of the slot machine from a first, basic gaming status to a second gaming status which provides higher gaming value than the first gaming status, when a predetermined combination of the symbols including the special symbol are aligned on the payline. In the specification, the first gaming status corresponds to a basic game, and the second gaming status corresponds to a big bonus game.

[0042] The present invention can be applied to a slot machine which does not require buttons for stopping reels (the reels are spun by a start lever or button and stop automatically). In such a case, the first gaming status corresponds to a primary game, and the second gaming status corresponds to a jackpot game including a secondary game, a progressive chance game or the like.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

[0043] The above objects and advantages of the present invention will become more apparent by describing in detail preferred exemplary embodiments thereof with reference to the accompanying drawings, wherein:

[0044] FIG. 1 is a perspective view showing the appearance of a slot machine according to a first embodiment of the invention;

[0045] FIG. 2 is a perspective view showing the structure of a panel display section and a peripheral configuration thereof;

[0046] FIG. 3 is a perspective view showing an appearance of a left reel liquid-crystal panel;

[0047] FIG. 4 is a descriptive view showing an example of symbols to be displayed on, a left reel, a center reel and a right reel;

[0048] FIG. 5 is a block diagram showing the electrical configuration of the slot machine;

[0049] FIG. 6 is a descriptive view showing an example of contents stored in a prize group sampling table;

[0050] FIG. 7 is a flowchart showing operation of a CPU during internal lottery operation;

[0051] FIG. 8 is a descriptive view showing an example of a stop table;